



# THE CHURCH AND THE NEGRO

A STATEMENT CONCERNING OUR  
WORK WITHIN THE BORDERS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

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ST. PAULS NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, LAWRENCEVILLE, VA.

# THE CHURCH AMONG THE NEGROES

By the Rev. SAMUEL H. BISHOP

## THE "PROBLEM"

ONE of the happy signs of the Church's life and growth in these days is the increasing sense of sureness of touch in her missionary work. Problems vast and complex do not now stun her into silence, nor difficulties turn her into sloughs of hesitation. China, Japan, the Philippines, Alaska, are no longer the stuff out of which dreams are made, but the open promises of a working day; they are distinctly set within the horizon of the possible to a calculating sense as well as to an obedient faith.

Only in one field does there seem to be uncertainty of touch, hesitating judgment, and faltering effort. About the Negro and about the methods of appeal to him we seem divided in mind, troubled in heart, and confused in action.

Perhaps we may simply note a few of the reasons for this anomalous condition which distresses us. One is that we are as a matter of fact a national church, with a democratic form of government; and national action on difficult and perplexing questions is always a compound of varying, and possibly of antagonistic sectional needs, motives, and forces. Another is that certain racial facts and necessities have flung our Church machinery out of gear. Still another is that we somehow lack the staying power which would keep us thinking at a hard and wearisome problem until we have solved it; hence our interest is spasmodic and fleeting, instead of abiding, insistent, and compelling,

as it ought to be. And lastly, we have almost no Negro specialists among the laity—men who view the work of missions Negro-end-to.

### THE PAST

But it would be utterly false if we gave the impression that our Church's work for the Negro has been or need be a failure. In ante-bellum days, notwithstanding all the faults of slavery, there was carried on an extraordinarily successful missionary activity which was blessed, not only with large numbers of communicants, but also with a very real religious and ethical development of Negro life and character. For example, in the old registry of Bruton Parish we find thirty-three consecutive pages entirely devoted to the record of baptisms of slaves or colored servants. This record extends from 1746 to 1797. During that period there were 1,122 Negroes baptized, and during the year 1750 the record of baptisms of Negroes in Bruton Parish alone was larger by one than the total number of infant and adult baptisms of Negroes in the Diocese of Southern Virginia during the year 1903. In 1724 the Reverend William Beech reported to the Bishop of London that he instructed and baptized (during 15 years) 200 slaves, and that the owners of slaves were generally careful to bring them to baptism. Similar work was being done in South Carolina. In St. Michael's record (Charleston) for the year 1818 there were registered 130 colored communicants to 350 white; and in St. Phillip's for the same year 180 colored to 320 white communicants. In 1856 there were in the diocese 3,022 colored to 2,971 white communicants.

The real fact is that the Christian people of the South felt deeply their responsibility for the moral and religious training of the Negro; and to some

measure of fulfilment of that responsibility is due the fact that the Negroes acquired during that period so much of ethical character and of the spirit of Jesus Christ as to enable the best of them to become teachers of their people, and to make all of them capable of the generous fidelity they manifested during the war. It was not infrequent in religious families of the South to find a white-haired saintly old Negro bearing witness to the things of God before white and black alike.

### THE PRESENT

There is no way of ascertaining definitely what proportion of the Negroes in this land were at the beginning of the war between the States baptized members of the Church. In 1859 there were recorded 468,000 members of the various churches in the South, of which it is perhaps fair to assume that more than 50,000 were baptized members of our Church. There are now about 20,000 communicants in the whole Church, twenty independent parishes and about 200 chapels and missions; many of which are steadily gaining in self-reliance, in appreciation of opportunity and of duty, and in courageous and faithful attack upon the hard and difficult tasks which confront them. In at least two southern dioceses the Negroes give to the work of the Church \$5.00 per capita; in a North Carolina town a congregation of working people gave for a new church building over \$8,000, besides at the same time maintaining and extending parochial work; a New Jersey mission, also of working people, gave over \$7,000 toward a new building—nearly one-half of its cost; it was a Negro congregation which vied with St. Thomas's, New York, in giving to missions an amount received for a new church building to replace one destroyed by fire; it was a Negro barber who

bought and paid for from his own earnings a building lot, paid most of the cost of a chapel building, and still bears most of the expense of a parochial school with 200 pupils; it was a graduate of St. Augustine's School who in Christ's name gave up personal ambition to become a farmer in a backwoods community, and at the same time to teach a school for which public provision could not be obtained; it was another graduate of St. Augustine's who trained five lay-readers, and with their help started a mission.

Work among the Negroes has its peculiar difficulties, some of which are attributable to our Church's own inertness and lack of vital and commanding interest, others to other causes. We do not give to the Negroes the same governmental initiative which they find in other bodies; and in consequence the Methodists and Baptists alone have nearly four million Negro members, and influence 75 per cent of the total population. But the loyalty and staying quality of our people, and especially of the graduates of our schools, under all conditions and amid all discouragements, are remarkable evidence of the Church's abiding power and influence. There is probably less leakage of cultivated and thoughtful young people from our Church than from any other body. An eminent judge in a southern state, himself a Methodist, paroles first offenders among Negro youth only to members of our Church; and the secretary of a great home-mission board has recently declared that upon the type of character which our Church tends to produce depends the whole hope for the moral and religious progress of the Negroes of this land.

Recognizing then, as we must, that from the time when the Reverend Absalom Jones, the first Negro

ordained to the ministry of the Church in this country, began his work in Philadelphia in 1795, to the present time, much devoted and heroic work has been done. Still the present conditions must be unsatisfactory to anyone who loves and believes in the Church, and who realizes how critical is the need of the Negro people in this land, and how serious the Negro problem is likely to be unless the Christian forces in the country shall awaken to the fact that this problem, like all of our great social problems, requires not so much a solvent as a solver. That Solver we believe to be Jesus Christ; and notwithstanding the smallness of our numbers, we believe the Church has a peculiar work to do, one of which many of the best colored people are conscious, and which they desire to see her accomplish.

## THE CHURCH'S AIMS

I. A MINISTRY Notwithstanding the uncertainty of which we have spoken, the Church is doing some things which are sure in insight, definite in aim, and certain in promise—the things which the Negro most needs, and the experience of the world most clearly certifies to be wise. We offer in our divinity schools a high order of training for those who are to be priests and prophets to their people; and we have one divinity school especially for Negro students, which is meeting with peculiar intelligence and skill the needs of men who are to serve in the cities and rural districts of the South. When one considers the lack of adequate previous training of some of our boys, and hence the necessarily extended course of study, it seems well within the limits of modesty to say that in wise adjust-



A CLASS OF TRAINED NURSES AT ST. AGNES'S HOSPITAL, RALEIGH, N. C.

*The Rev. A. B. Hunter, Principal of St. Augustine's School, and Mrs. Hunter, stand in the center. Dr. Hoyden sits in front of them*



ment of studies to the needs of the students, in drill so intelligent and earnest as to be an inspiration as well as a task, in modest scholarship and high thinking the Bishop Payne Divinity School has no superior. It has graduated fifty-nine men, of whom ten died in orders and forty-nine are in the active ministry, all doing good work for the Master and for their people.

## II. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We have a normal and collegiate school which for more than forty-five years has planted in southern life a seed of young men and women to whom it had imparted mental and spiritual culture, and whose energies it had trained for service of hand as well as of head and of heart. St. Augustine's School has been unique among Negro schools for its harmoniously proportioned training of hand and head and heart; and it has kept the visions and ideals of culture and of mental discipline together with a constant and keen sense of the necessity that an educated man and woman shall know in sympathy and in fact the pleasure and the profit of manual toil. Throughout the South St. Augustine's is known as the Negro's West Point, which characterization does not refer to a military regime, but to urgent insistence upon the moral and religious aids to character, upon honest work, high standards, and an austere modesty as to personal claims. The normal department of St. Augustine's is doing admirable work in training teachers, and is therefore meeting, so far as its material abilities permit, *the* most pressing need of Negro life in the South. The hospital and the training school for nurses are among the most useful services the Church is rendering in any field.

We have two great industrial and farm schools, St. Paul's and the Fort Valley school—St. Paul's so

well and favorably known as to need no description here other than to say that it has under God morally and economically re-made the Negroes in a district comprising two or more counties, and is influencing southern Virginia and northern North Carolina. The Fort Valley School is the most important Negro school in Georgia, and a state supervisor of schools says it is doing what the white schools are talking about doing.

Aside from the schools mentioned, we have eight secondary and industrial schools in eight dioceses, progressing slowly but steadily toward high standards of competency and efficiency—teaching and inspiring the practice of real religion, sound manners, honest industry, and useful citizenship.

### III. PAROCHIAL CARE

Again, there are about 100 parochial schools attached to parishes and missions, which are training about 5,000 pupils in the beginnings of religion and in the principles of right living. There is a widespread opinion, even among Churchmen, that parochial schools are a questionable good, in that they may have the effect of releasing the state from its obligation to educate all its children. But there is one simple fact of history which should calm that fear, namely, that the prompting to public education—indeed, the prompting and typical example for practically every form of public care of helpless life—has come from the Church. This is not to say that public hospitals, homes for the aged and the defective, orphan asylums and schools would not have come sometime; but only to state that as a matter of fact they did come from the Church. With all their faults and poverty parochial schools for Negroes are better than the majority of public schools, and therefore still have suggestive and typical value.

The South with its expensive system of double schools, though it is heroically trying, has not yet given school opportunity to more than 52 per cent of its Negro school children, and to those only for about an average of four months in a year. This case of the parochial school might rest on an appeal to the method of history; but there are other matters, like reverence, purity of character, faith, the discipline of God, the lack of which in too many of our American youth of all classes—not to speak of inability to use English, or of cluttered minds and untrained talents—may well give the critics of the parochial school pause, and induce an unwonted modesty of judgment. Whatever the future may determine, it is not yet time to abolish the Negro parochial school; though it should be unselfish, suggestive, and exemplary. The policeman who patrols the beat in which St. Mary's (Columbia, S. C.) is situated, says that school has transformed a section which was formerly one of the worst slums in the city.

Now we must turn to our church and mission work. That depends largely upon our Negro clergy; and of them it is our joy to say that they are men of uniformly high character, fine purpose, real consecration, and steady faith. Many of them are lonely, most of them ill-paid, none in easy fields, few with even fair parish equipment, yet they work uncomplainingly, zealously, hopefully, devotedly, for their Lord, as Christian missionaries should. And their work bears fruit in an increased number of communicants, in moralized homes, in leavened communities, and in a saner and higher religious life for all the Christian bodies of Negroes. In every diocese but one where Negroes are, the number of our communicants has increased each year for several years; in three dioceses

the gain has been proportionately greater among Negroes than among whites; three parishes have more than tripled the number of communicants in five years; giving is steadily increasing; service of the community is more intelligent and effective; where the Church is strong, race relations are good and Negro crime and vice diminish; in Brunswick County, Virginia, the jail has been empty for many months; in short, Christ is the Solver, and the Church is His representative.

But men and means are needed; established schools must be equipped and strengthened; missions and parishes should be a thousand instead of a hundred; ignorance, disease, and immorality are still woefully rife; fear and sullenness stalk where love and confidence should reign; life is scant where it should be joyous and abundant; advancing ambition and increasing power need subjection to the Master of Love. We ask for this work, interest, prayer, faith, and money.

#### FOR OUR WORK AMONG NEGROES

**O** Lord, our Saviour, Who hast told us that Thou wilt require much of those to whom much is given; grant that Thy Church may more fully discharge her responsibility to extend Thy Kingdom among the Negro people in our land. Raise up native ministers to lead them in the paths of righteousness. Guide them in their work and send down Thy blessings, temporal and spiritual, upon all the members of this race. All this we ask in Thy Name. *Amen.*

*This pamphlet may be obtained from the Literature Department, Board of Missions, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York. Ask for No. 700.*

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